

**CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**  
**Towards Transforming Conflicts into Manageable Disputes**  
USAID-funded project with The Asia Foundation  
January – June 2004

This semi-annual report covers activities from January 2004 through June 2004 under the Conflict Management in the Philippines (CMP) Project of The Asia Foundation supported by a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The total grant amount is \$1,300,000 covering the period beginning October 1, 2003 and ending on September 20, 2006. This semi-annual report is in compliance with the instructions under the Office of Regional Procurement (ORP) No. 18 dated August 19, 2003 and ORP No. 20 dated February 2, 2004.

In late 2002, The Asia Foundation supported a conflict survey in Mindanao on citizen's perceptions of conflict in the region. The results of the survey revealed that while the Muslim-Christian conflict in Mindanao dominates the international and local press, clan violence or *rido* is actually more pertinent to the daily lives of the people. Citizens are more concerned about the prevalence of clan conflict and its negative impact on their communities than they are about the conflict between the state and rebel groups in Mindanao.

These findings were a take off point for the Foundation's endeavor to develop a deeper understanding of conflict dynamics in Mindanao. Building upon this initial research, and drawing upon the Foundation's wealth of experience in peace-building through its governance and legal reform programs, the Foundation's conflict management program was developed.

The three-year Conflict Management in the Philippines Project aims to address the issues of conflict management using multiple approaches to address two distinct types of conflict affecting the Philippines: **Endemic Clan Conflict** and **Community Conflicts over Natural Resources**. Given that conflict is inherent in the process of change and development, the goal of this program is not to eliminate but rather to transform conflicts into manageable disputes and debates. This will be achieved through increased understanding of the dynamics of a specific conflict, enhancing conflict resolution mechanisms, improving communication channels within affected communities and between government and community groups, and through policy-oriented substantive discussions with inputs from key stakeholders.

## **Addressing Clan Conflict**

The stereotype that outsiders have of the conflict-affected areas of Mindanao is that the violence is related to separatist armed groups, or others, that have degenerated into terrorism. Nevertheless, in reality, the problem of violence historically has been quite generalized, with feuding clans considered a fact of life in the region. The interaction

between separatist and clan conflict can be quite pernicious, as participants join a separatist group in order to take revenge in a feud, when feud violence is interpreted by the government as separatist violence, or if participants in a feud portray their antagonists as anti-government. In these instances, even well-meaning government security responses can trigger harmful reactions in terms of feeding the cycle of clan violence.

To address clan conflict in Mindanao, the Foundation supports in-depth diagnostic activities that will provide the concrete data required to design and support strategic interventions that will enable community members to effectively prevent clan conflicts and to enable the government to more effectively react to such conflicts.

#### Program Highlights

- From January 12-15, the Foundation supported the participation of three persons in the Southeast Asian Conflict Studies Network (SEACSN) Conference 2004 in Penang, Malaysia. With the theme “Issues and Challenges for Conflict Resolution in Southeast Asia,” the conference examined issues of peace and conflict resolution in light of current regional and global challenges. The conference focused on the following themes: (1) Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Southeast Asia, (2) Culture in Conflict and Conflict Resolution, (3) Public Policy Disputes, (4) Inter-state Conflicts, (5) Environmental Issues, (6) Reconciliation, Peace Building and Post-War Reconstruction, (7) Democracy and Civil Society; and (8) Gender Issues. Among the three participants, two were Foundation program officers, and the third was a representative from the Institute of Bangsamoro Studies, a civil society organization based in Mindanao.
- The Foundation organized a consultation and planning meeting at its office on March 27 for researchers on clan conflict. The purpose of the meeting was to assess the state of research on clan conflict, to clarify concepts and issues surrounding *rido* (clan violence) and to establish the parameters for possible research. The meeting was facilitated by Dr. David Fairman of the Consensus Building Institute and was attended by 18 experts from Mindanao-based civil society organizations and academics. The meeting generated significant discussion focused on the following questions: what constitutes clan conflict and what are the existing formal and informal mechanisms used to resolve these; when does clan conflict occur and what types of issues escalate into clan conflict; how are young people socialized about *rido*; what are the variations of clan conflict among different ethnic groups; how does clan conflict overlap with government and separatist conflict; to what extent are clan conflicts mistaken by the government to be separatist conflicts; and, what could government and peace activists do to isolate these different kinds of conflict so that effective interventions might be put in place. Through the discussions, cases of clan violence and escalation examples were highlighted and clarifications were made on the nature and stages of *rido* and the various types of clan conflict. The discussion also generated many research questions and preliminary research problems raised by the participants. As a result of this meeting, the Foundation was able to establish the parameters for more systematic research on clan conflict.

- Eleven partners have submitted research proposals to examine issues related to the conduct of clan conflict, which the Foundation is reviewing. The proposals are in various stages of revision, with several already being finalized and due to be approved at the end of July.
- The Foundation supported the participation of four persons to attend the Culture of Peace (COP) and Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) workshop held in Habarana, Sri Lanka, May 24-31. Twenty-three participants from Tamil and Sinhalese ethnic groups attended the workshop. The Foundation's conflict management program officer, along with three members of the Philippines PCIA Network also participated in the workshop. Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment is a means of anticipating, monitoring, and evaluating the ways in which an intervention may affect or may have affected the dynamics of peace or conflict in a conflict-prone area. The conflict situation in the eastern province of Sri Lanka is quite similar to the on-going conflicts in Mindanao. The conflicts in both countries may be traced to colonial roots and are drawn across ethnic and religious lines against the backdrop of contemporary globalization processes that produce inconsistencies in systems and increasing social inequalities. Supporting the PCIA training in Sri Lanka was an excellent opportunity to compare experiences and to draw insights into building peace within and across multi-ethnic communities.
- *Newsbreak* took preliminary steps to prepare a series of special reports on *rido* (clan violence). The series will explore the nature of the conflict, its persistence, and strategies for resolution. By gathering stories of age-old family feuds and writing about them in a popular way, *Newsbreak* aims to increase public awareness about issues related to *rido*, as well as provide valuable insights for policymakers and government officials. Highlighting *rido* in the popular media will draw attention to the reality of the interplay between small-scale conflicts such as *rido*, and the major conflicts in Mindanao. These special reports on *rido* will complement other research projects on clan conflict that will highlight important findings.

## **Addressing Community Conflicts over Natural Resources**

Conflicts over community resources often divide residents of a community, and they also often lead to conflict between the community and the government. While an intra-community conflict could hamper productivity, investments, and economic growth, the latter could lead in the extreme to armed insurgency.

A major concern in the development of community-based resource management systems is the strengthening of mechanisms for effective and equitable management of such conflicts. However, because of institutional overlaps, contradictory policies on natural resource management, and the nature of Philippine court processes, many of these conflicts have evaded resolution and have matured into major public disputes. Moreover, public pressure to grant citizens a stronger voice in environmental decision-making has made it imperative to examine the utilization, and ultimately the institutionalization, of conflict management mechanisms. To address community conflicts over natural resources, therefore, the Foundation seeks to build the capacity of resource management

departments of the national government, promote negotiation coaching for communities, and support conflict management for multiple stakeholder conflicts.

### Program Highlights

- On May 6 and 7, 2004, the Mediators Network for Sustainable Peace, Inc. (MedNet) organized a training/workshop on conflict mapping for 55 network members and partner organizations, from various non-government organizations, the DAR and the DENR. The training was conducted by Dr. David Fairman of the Consensus Building Institute. As a result of this activity, the participants were able to: (1) achieve a common understanding of what a conflict map is, its framework and essential components; (2) share experiences on current practices in the design of conflict maps; (3) gain an understanding of strategies and methodologies used in designing a conflict map and in conducting conflict mapping related to natural resource-use, local governance, land tenure and other types of multi-party disputes; and, (4) critique data collated from selected projects based on the inputs of Dr. David Fairman.
- Tanggol Kalikasan has submitted, and is currently revising, a proposal on capacity building for local governments and non-governmental organizations on environmental governance, alternative dispute resolution processes and negotiation coaching. This proposal is still under negotiation.
- The Cebu Mediation Foundation Inc. (CMFI), has submitted, and is currently revising, a proposal to craft and pilot a governance framework for environmental conflict resolution for the DENR in Region VII. This proposal is still under negotiation.

### **Next Steps**

During the next reporting period, the Foundation anticipates that the conflict management program officers will be reviewing more proposals dealing with community natural resource conflicts and proposals on facilitating dialogues between peace and order councils. The preliminary findings of the researchers on clan conflict also are expected, as well as proposed intervention strategies resulting from the preliminary research findings.